

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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P R 061707Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0669

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 13397

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MPOL, NATO, FR

SUBJECT: GISCARD'S DEFENSE POLICY: THE NEXT SIX YEARS

REF: (A) PARIS 2719 DTG 281837Z JAN 76 (NOTAL),
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(C) 75 PARIS 15544 DTG 161955Z JUN 75 (NOTAL),
(D) 75 PARIS 22612 DTG 031903Z SEP 75 (NOTAL),
(E) 75 PARIS 13545 DTG 281010Z MAY 75 (NOTAL).

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: GOF CABINET APPROVED MAY 5 GISCARD'S COMPREHENSIVE PROPOSAL FOR SIX-YEAR DEFENSE SPENDING PROGRAM THROUGH 1982. PROGRAM FORESEES GENERAL MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL NUCLEAR FORCES, ALTHOUGH SLIGHT REDUCTION IN PLUTON REGIMENTS. AT SAME TIME, GREATER EFFORT WILL BE GIVEN TO IMPROVING FRANCE'S CONVENTIONAL FORCES. CONSCRIPTION WILL BE CONTINUED, ARMY WILL BE REORGANIZED INTO 16 "DIVISIONS" AND AMBITIOUS PROGRAM OF NEW EQUIPMENT IS FORESEEN FOR ARMY, AIR FORCE AND -- TO LESSER EXTENT -- THE NAVY. IN EXPLAINING THIS SIX-YEAR PLAN TO FRENCH PUBLIC LAST NIGHT DURING TV INTERVIEW, GISCARD REPEATED THAT FRANCE WILL NOT REJOIN NATO'S INTEGRATED MILITARY STRUCTURE AND POINTED TO NEED FOR FRANCE TO MAINTAIN STANDING ARMY EQUAL TO THAT OF FEDERAL REPUBLIC. WE BELIEVE THIS NEW PROGRAM -- GISCARD'S FIRST LONG-TERM COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT ON DEFENSE -- CONFORMS TO THRUST OF SLOWLY EVOLVING GISCARDIAN DEFENSE STRATEGY WE HAVE ANALYZED OVER PAST MONTHS (SEE REFS A AND B FOR EXAMPLE). WHILE FRANCE REMAINS WEDDED TO PRIMACY OF ITS NUCLEAR FORCE AS BACKBONE OF ITS DEFENSE STRATEGY, GISCARD IS QUITE CLEARLY EMBARKING FRANCE ON DETERMINED PROGRAM TO CREATE MORE CREDIBLE CONVENTIONAL "OPTIONS" FOR POSSIBLE USE BY FRENCH PRESIDENT IN TIME OF CRISIS. WHILE PURPOSES TO BE SERVED BY SUCH CONVENTIONAL "OPTIONS" REMAIN OBSCURE, THEY DO NOT YET SEEM DESIGNED TO BRING FRANCE BACK INTO THE FOLD ON NATO STRATEGY. IF CARRIED OUT, THIS SIX-YEAR PROGRAM COULD PROVIDE FRANCE THE MILITARY MEANS TO BACK UP SOMEWHAT MORE AMBITIOUS POLICY OF POLITICAL/MILITARY INVOLVEMENT OUTSIDE OF CENTRAL EUROPE. PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE OF DEFENSE PLAN BEGINNING MAY 20 -- FEATURING
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ALREADY WELL-PUBLICIZED INTERVENTION BY PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC TO DEFEND FRANCE'S "INDEPENDENT" DEFENSE POLICY -- MAY GIVE US BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF PLAN'S STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS. WE WILL POUCH COPIES OF PLAN AND GISCARD'S TV INTERVIEW TO DEPARTMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. SIX YEAR PLAN:

FRENCH CABINET APPROVED ON MAY 5 DETAILED SIX-YEAR
DEFENSE PLAN COVERING 1977-82. UNDER NEW PROGRAM,
DEFENSE BUDGET WILL INCREASE FROM CURRENT LEVEL OF 17
OF OVERALL GOVERNMENTAL BUDGET TO 20 BY 1982. DEFENSE
BUDGET IS PROGRAMMED FOR AVERAGE INCREASE OF 15 PER
YEAR OVER THIS PERIOD SO THAT BY 1982 TOTAL DEFENSE
BUDGET WILL BE DOUBLE THE FIGURE PLANNED FOR 1977 (GOING
FROM 58 BILLION FRANCS TO 115 BILLION FRANCS IN 1982).
DEFENSE BUDGET AS PORTION OF GNP WILL GO FROM CURRENT
LEVEL OF ABOUT 3 TO 1982 LEVEL OF ABOUT 3.6. IN OTHER
WORDS, ALL KEY BUDGETARY TRENDS ARE UP. MILITARY CON-
SCRIPTIONS WILL BE MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT PERIOD, ALTHOUGH

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P R 061707Z MAY 76

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MANNER OF IMPLEMENTATION MAY BE SOFTENED. FRENCH ARMY
WILL BE SLIGHTLY REDUCED FROM CURRENT STRENGTH (330,000)
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TO ABOUT 310,000. TODAY'S SIX DIVISION ARMY ORGANIZA-
TION GRADUALLY WILL BE RESTRUCTURED TO PROVIDE 16 SMALLER
AND LIGHTER DIVISIONS (8 ARMORED, 6 INFANTRY, ONE AIR-
BORNE AND ONE ALPINE). MANNING OF OTHER SERVICES WILL
REMAIN ESSENTIALLY THE SAME. THE ARMY WILL PROCURE
SIZABLE ADDITIONAL NUMBERS OF AMX-30 MAIN BATTLE TANKS
AND NEW AMX-10 WHEELED ARMORED VEHICLES. THERE WILL BE
FIVE -- RATHER THAN SIX -- PLUTON TACTICAL NUCLEAR
MISSILE REGIMENTS. AIR FORCE WILL RECEIVE 200 NEW AIR
CRAFT INCLUDING MIRAGE-2000, JAGUARS AND ALPHA JETS.
FRENCH MIRAGE IV STRATEGIC BOMBERS WILL BE MAINTAINED
UNTIL 1985 WHEN THEIR NUCLEAR MISSIONS WILL BE TAKEN OVER
BY IRBM AND SSBN FORCES. NAVY WILL BEGIN LONG-RANGE
PROGRAM OF MODERNIZATION THAT WILL SEE INITIAL DECREASE
IN TOTAL NUMBER OF WAR SHIPS AS INEVITABLE PRICE FOR
FUTURE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM. SSBN FLEET WILL TOTAL SIX.
TWO FRENCH ATTACK CARRIERS WILL BE EQUIPPED WITH SUPER
ETENDARD AIRCRAFT WITH TACTICAL NUCLEAR CAPABILITY. ONE
NUCLEAR POWERED HELICOPTER CARRIER AND FIRST FOUR (OF
PLANNED 20) SSN'S WILL BE FUNDED.

3. GISCARDIAN PROGRAM:

AFTER TWO YEARS IN OFFICE, GISCARD HAS NOW GIVEN HIS
OWN DIRECTION TO FRANCE'S DEFENSE STRATEGY AND FORCE
STRUCTURE. AS WE HAVE REPORTED EARLIER (REF C), IT CON-
TAINS A GREAT DEAL OF CONTINUITY WITH EARLIER GAULLIST
DEFENSE POLICIES. IT MAINTAINS GAULLIST COMMITMENT TO
MODERN STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL NUCLEAR FORCE POSTURE BUT
IT ADMITS THAT STRATEGIC NUCLEAR DETERRENCE DOES NOT
PROVIDE ALL POLITICAL/MILITARY OPTIONS THAT FRANCE NEEDS
TO INSURE ITS SECURITY IN COMING DECADES. IT DIFFERS
FROM GAULLIST HERITAGE PRECISELY IN ITS AGGRESSIVE AND
STRAIGHTFORWARD APPROACH TO CREATING CREDIBLE CONVENTION-

AL "OPTIONS" FOR POSSIBLE USE BY FRENCH PRESIDENT IN CARRYING OUT FRANCE'S FOREIGN POLICIES. GISCARD'S TV INTERVIEW MAY 5 SHEDS LIGHT ON THESE AND OTHER CONCEPTS.

4. GISCARD EXPLAINS THE PROGRAM:

IN TELEVISED INTERVIEW YESTERDAY EVENING FOLLOWING
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CABINET MEETING WHICH APPROVED SIX-YEAR DEFENSE PLAN, GISCARD PRESENTED CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURE THAT PLAN IS INTENDED TO CARRY OUT.

(A) NATO: GISCARD SAID THERE IS NO QUESTION OF FRANCE REJOINING NATO'S INTEGRATED MILITARY STRUCTURE.

(B) THE DRAFT: THERE WERE TWO REASONS GISCARD GAVE FOR MAINTAINING DRAFT. FIRST, BUDGETARY EXPENSES OF PROFESSIONAL ARMY WOULD BE SO HEAVY THAT FRANCE WOULD HAVE TO SETTLE FOR A DEFENSE STRUCTURE SMALLER THAN IT REQUIRES. SECOND, AND RENEWING THEME GISCARD STRUCK EARLY IN HIS ADMINISTRATION, DRAFT INSURES THAT ARMY WILL BE PART OF FRENCH SOCIETY AND NOT CUT OFF FROM MAIN STREAM OF NATION. HE SAID, "I AM CONVINCED THAT THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO CAN ASSURE THEIR OWN SECURITY ARE THOSE WHO HAVE DECIDED TO DO IT THEMSELVES."

(C) GERMANY: IN JUSTIFYING CONTINUATION OF DRAFT, GISCARD STRUCK AMBIGUOUS NOTE ABOUT GERMANY SAYING, "THE GERMAN ARMY IS FOUNDED ON THE DRAFT. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE MILITARY BALANCE OF OUR CONTINENT THAT THE FRENCH FORCE BE OF THE SAME SIZE AS THE OTHER FORCE OF OUR CONTINENT, THAT IS TO SAY, THE GERMAN ARMY." EMBASSY COMMENT: THIS TYPE OF RHETORIC TOUCHES VERY CORE OF FRENCH NATIONALISM AND ITS GAULLIST IMAGE. IT RECALLS POMPIDOU'S EFFORTS TO USE FRENCH PERFORMANCE VIS-A-VIS THE FRG AS MEASURING ROD OF FRENCH NATIONAL "SUCCESS." IT IS OUT OF CHARACTER FOR GISCARD, HOWEVER, TO RIP SCAB OFF LATENT FRENCH FEARS OF GERMANY SO HARSHLY, ALTHOUGH THIS WILL SURELY HELP HIM MOBILIZE POPULAR FRENCH SUPPORT FOR HIS SIX-YEAR PLAN.

(D) CONVENTIONAL FORCES: GISCARD RENEWED THEME THAT SEEMS TO HAVE BECOME MAJOR PREOCCUPATION IN HIS APPROACH TO BRINGING "CHANGE WITHOUT RISK" TO FRENCH DEFENSE STRATEGY: POINTING OUT THAT ALL RECENT "BATTLES" (VIETNAM, MIDDLE EAST, CZECHOSLOVAKIA) HAVE BEEN "

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"CONVENTIONAL" NOT "NUCLEAR", HE SAID, "THE SECURITY OF
FRANCE CANNOT REPOSE ON THE HYPOTHESIS THAT THERE WOULD
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NEVER BE A (CONVENTIONAL) BATTLE." EMBASSY COMMENT: GAULLIST DEFENSE POLICY ALSO RECOGNIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING LIMITED CONVENTIONAL OPTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT. FOR THAT REASON FRANCE UNDER DE GAULLE MAINTAINED VERY LARGE CONVENTIONAL MILITARY FORCES. THE BULK OF THESE FORCES, HOWEVER, WERE ESSENTIALLY ORIENTED TOWARD CENTRAL EUROPE. INNOVATION THAT GISCARD HAS BROUGHT TO FRENCH STRATEGY IS PERCEPTION THAT FRANCE'S FUTURE SECURITY INTERESTS WILL REQUIRE A MUCH LESS STATIC APPROACH TO CONVENTIONAL FORCE POSTURE. HIS REFORMS -- MANY OF WHICH ARE CONTAINED IN THIS PLAN -- ARE DESIGNED TO GIVE FRENCH ARMED FORCES GREATER MOBILITY AND GREATER AUTONOMY OF OPERATION. WE SEE LITTLE EVIDENCE SO FAR, HOWEVER, TO SUGGEST THAT STAYING POWER OF FRENCH CONVENTIONAL FORCES IS TO BE SIMILARLY INCREASED. UNTIL THAT CHANGE OCCURS, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT GISCARD'S CHANGES WILL BRING FRENCH CLOSER TO NATO'S STRATEGY FOR DEFENSE OF CENTRAL EUROPE IN ANY SIGNIFICANT WAY. (SEE REF D FOR OUR DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THIS ASPECT.) THAT DOES NOT FORECLOSE POSSIBILITY THAT GISCARD, BUILDING ON HIS CURRENT REFORMS, MAY IN FUTURE MODIFY FRENCH STRATEGY TO BRING IT INTO LINE WITH OUR CONCEPTION OF FORWARD AND SUSTAINED CONVENTIONAL DEFENSE OF NATO EUROPE. BUT WE ARE NOT THERE YET.

5. WHAT GISCARD DID NOT SAY:

OF THE MANY THINGS GISCARD COULD HAVE ADDRESSED IN HIS INTERVIEW, THREE TOPICS WERE NOTABLE BY THEIR ABSENCE, PERHAPS BY DESIGN, PERHAPS BY ACCIDENT. FIRST, HE MADE NO REFERENCE TO A "EUROPEAN DEFENSE ENTITY." THIS IS PERFECTLY IN KEEPING WITH HIS EARLIER STATEMENTS WHICH PUT ANY SUCH CONSIDERATION -- SO WARM TO HEARTS OF MANY GAULLISTS -- OFF TO VERY INDEFINITE FUTURE (REF E). SECOND, HE SAID NOTHING ABOUT HIS PLANS FOR THE TWO FRENCH DIVISIONS IN GERMANY. MOD BOURGES TOLD US SOME TIME AGO THAT "MODEST" STREAMLINING REDUCTIONS WOULD AFFECT THOSE FORCES, BUT ONLY SLIGHTLY. RECENT PRESS SPECULATION HAS SUGGESTED CUTS MIGHT BE MORE THAN MODEST. FRG EMBASSY SOURCES MAINTAIN THAT FRENCH HAVE SAID NOTHING ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF IMPENDING CUTS IN FRENCH II

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CORPS FORCES IN FRG. THIRD, HE GAVE NO INDICATION OF THE ROLE THAT HE WOULD ASSIGN TO CARRIER-BASED TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS (E.G., ASW, AIR DEFENSE, OR OFFENSIVE).

WE WILL WANT TO WATCH CLOSELY EACH OF THESE ISSUES FOR
SIGNS OF CHANGE OR CONTINUITY.
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